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NATIONAL MISSILE DEFENSE: LAYING THE  
GROUNDWORK FOR FUTURE U.S. SECURITY POLICY

by

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## **Abstract**

International security has come to a crossroad. No longer is the world made up of a bipolar system divided between the United States and the Soviet Union. Instead the international security system consists of a multi-polar environment with only one superpower—the United States. With this change to the international system, a time has come for the United States to examine its role and policies with relation to international security. In addition to changes in the international environment, major technological changes have altered the capabilities and roles of defense systems. It is possible that we now have the capability in a national missile defense program to field a defensive system capable of protecting nations from weapons of mass destruction. This paper examines the geo-political impacts of fielding the national missile defense system to include the impacts on U.S. relations with other nations and the impact on arms control treaties. In addition, it examines the relationship between missile defense, deterrence, and diplomacy and recommends a map for future U.S. security policy.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

On September 8, 1944, and only a few hours after a high ranking British official announced that the Battle of London was at last over, the first German V-2 missile impacted on British soil. The original British defenses designed to defend against German V-1s fired from the continent initially proved successful, with over 75 percent of the German V-1s either destroyed or diverted from hitting London. However, once the Germans turned to the much faster V-2, British defenses faltered against missiles with much shorter warning times. As the civilian population called for better protection, British planners called for desperate measures, at one point considering barrage weapons fired at points in the sky through which the V-2s were expected to pass. Fortunately for the British, these emergency plans never came to fruition as the war in Europe drew to a close before German V-2 attacks could cause any more destruction. After only a nine-month missile campaign, German V-weapons caused over 30,000 casualties in England alone, and the world witnessed the impact of weapons for which there was no defense at that time.<sup>1</sup> The world had also witnessed, but probably did not immediately appreciate, a change in military thought that drives international security today. No longer would

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<sup>1</sup> Michael O. Wheeler, "The Limits of Defense," 21 September 1999, paper presented to 1999 Joint Operations Symposium, National Defense University, Ft. McNair, Washington, D.C.

<sup>2</sup> Gordon Wright, *The Ordeal of Total War/1939-1945*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968): 98.

geographic barriers—be it the English Channel or the Atlantic Ocean—provide the protection of just a few years before.<sup>3</sup> Instead, ballistic missile technology, coupled with the capability of nuclear weapons that was demonstrated one year later, changed the way the world looked at defense. No longer was a defensive plan aimed at attriting a large portion of incoming missiles sufficient. Nuclear capability made it necessary to stop every inbound missile.

Just as the British sought a defense against the seemingly invulnerable V-2s during the Second World War, the United States today seeks a defense—the proposed National Missile Defense (NMD) system—against the seemingly invulnerable nuclear ballistic missile threat that it could face in the near future. A national missile defense system is not a new idea. The United States had missile defenses under review as early as the 1950s, and the arguments against the system then are remarkably similar to the arguments against them now. Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense under both Presidents Kennedy and Johnson argued firmly against our proposed anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system in 1967, while at the same time announcing its implementation.<sup>4</sup> McNamara's case against the ABM system included predictions that fielding an ABM system would spur an arms race with the Soviet Union; that the time required for hostile nations (in this case, China) to develop a significant ICBM force would be greater than the time required for the United States to detect the threat and counter it; and that while defense against an ICBM threat was worthwhile, it was prudent to wait for a better

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<sup>3</sup> Gordon Wright, *The Ordeal of Total War/1939-1945*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968): 98.

<sup>4</sup> Morton H. Halperin, "The Decision to Deploy the ABM: Bureaucratic and Domestic Politics in the Johnson Administration," *World Politics*, (October 1972): 62.

understanding of the technology involved.<sup>5</sup> Even though the system proposed by the Johnson administration never came to fruition, the United States did eventually field an ABM system. The Safeguard ABM system, in place for only four months in 1976, is the only ABM system to ever be operational in the United States.

Even though a United States anti-ballistic missile defense has only been operational for four months out of the last 24 years, the subject has been debated since Congress directed the Safeguard shutdown. President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and President Bush's Global Protection Against Limited Strikes (GPALS) programs both sought to restore ABM systems to our national defense. Now, after years of debate, the United States is close to deciding whether to proceed with the deployment of a National Missile Defense system designed to defend the United States against limited ICBM attacks. This capability is highlighted in our National Security Strategy:

We intend to determine in 2000 whether to deploy a limited national missile defense against ballistic missile threats to the United States from rogue states. The Administration's decision will be based on an assessment of the four factors that must be taken into account in deciding whether to field this system: (1) whether the threat is materializing; (2) the status of the technology based on an initial series of rigorous flight tests, and the proposed system's operational effectiveness; (3) whether the system is affordable; and (4) the implications that going forward with NMD deployment would hold for the overall strategic environment and our arms control objectives, including efforts to achieve further reductions in strategic nuclear arms under START II and START III.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the direction provided in our National Security Strategy, the United States is bound by the July 1999 National Missile Defense Act which declares 'the policy of the United States to deploy as soon as technologically possible an

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<sup>5</sup> Wheeler, 4.



effective National Missile Defense system capable of defending the territory of the United States against limited ballistic missile attack'.<sup>7</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact the proposed limited National Missile Defense program will have on the overall strategic environment and our arms control objectives. In addition, it shall examine the impact of the NMD system on our future national security strategy. Due to the somewhat limited scope of this paper, the threat, cost and technological capability issues of the NMD will not be examined, and will not have an impact on the conclusions.

If the United States adheres to the direction of its own National Security Strategy and the guidance spelled out in the National Missile Defense Act, and if a system meets the requirements spelled out in that guidance, a limited National Missile Defense system will be activated in the near future. The challenge that will face our leaders will be to build a National Missile Defense that will truly enhance not only the security of the United States, but international security as well. A system has yet to be designed, or even advocated, that has a 100 percent success rate. Therefore, a missile defense system must work hand-in-hand with diplomatic measures to improve the security of the United States. In addition, in its role as the sole international superpower in a vastly multi-polar world, every action by the United States results in a corresponding reaction across the rest of the world. With this in mind, the means by which the United States deploys a missile defense system will have a major impact on our international security for future generations. In other words, what we are selling, may not be as important as how we

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<sup>6</sup> A National Security Strategy for a New Century, The White House, 1999, 16.

<sup>7</sup> Ivo H. Daalder, James M. Goldgeier, and James M. Lindsay, "Deploying NMD: Not Whether, But How," *Survival*, (Spring 2000): 10.

sell it. It is imperative that we as a nation proceed at a deliberate pace in our planning and implementation of a missile defense. Two central thoughts should remain key as we determine how and what to deploy. The first is that our decision should be based on a respect for our own power. We should be neither ashamed of our responsibility to defend our citizens, nor should we be too anxious to flout our own strength. As President Theodore Roosevelt would say, we should speak softly yet carry a big stick. The second central thought that should form the basis of our missile defense deployment is that our foreign policy, and in turn our defense policy, should emphasize building and maintaining strong coalitions with our allies. This entails providing defenses that not only convince United States citizens that they are protected, but that convince our allies that they add to their security as well.

Before we examine the geo-political impacts of a National Missile Defense program, we should first define the type of system that would best suit the needs of the United States. To define the system, we should first define the ends or effects we hope to gain by fielding a ballistic missile defense.

To view the purpose of a missile defense system as simply to knock down missiles inbound to the United States would be far too elementary. While that is exactly what the system itself should be designed to do, the effects of deploying such a system will be much more far reaching, and we should deploy the system with those desired effects in mind. The primary military goal of the missile defense system should be to defend the United States and its citizens from attack, while the primary geo-political goal should be to dissuade and deter our adversaries from threatening the United States. With the proposed limited system, the defense against attack would be limited to those

adversaries initially referred to by our government as “rogue states”, but now more commonly called “states of concern”. We should also use the impact of the proposed missile defense system to shape our national security strategy for the future by focusing on three long-term goals. First, we should use our missile defense to stop ballistic missile development programs in developing nations by proving their uselessness. Second, we should use our missile defense technology to take the incentive out of long-range missile proliferation efforts. These first two goals can be obtained if we can first convince nations that there is little benefit to be gained by ballistic missile development. Third, while our security policy with respect to Russia will remain based on deterrence, we should begin to explore a large-scale reduction in nuclear forces by transitioning from a deterrence based security policy to a policy based less on nuclear retaliation with respect to other nations.

What we should not seek with the development of a missile defense system is just as important as what we should seek. The proposed defense system should not be a covert attempt to abrogate the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. If our goal is to withdraw from the treaty, we should simply do it by giving our legally mandated six-month notification. But, if our goal is to provide a limited defense for our nation, then there is no need to abrogate the treaty at this time. By amending the treaty instead of abrogating it, we leave one of the crucial diplomatic ties between the United States and Russia intact, thus leaving more options for the future.

The policy spelled out in our National Security Strategy, and passed by Congress and signed by the President in our National Missile Defense Act, calls for a “limited national missile defense” against a “limited ballistic missile attack”. This limited system

would differ greatly from President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative system that was designed to defend the nation against all ballistic missile threats, and from President Bush's Global Protection Against Limited Strikes system that was designed to protect many of our allies as well. In keeping with our national policy, a limited missile defense system shall be examined in this paper. The merits of a more robust system will most certainly be debated in the not so distant future, but several factors should drive us in the direction of a limited system. Without going into detail, both cost and technology would seem to preclude any immediate support of a more robust or unlimited system at this time. As well, if we shall seek to explore diplomatic as well as defensive options to international security, it will be much more difficult while advocating an unlimited system. While limited does entail a relatively small system--restricted to approximately 100 interceptors, and a capability to defend only the United States--it does not necessarily entail limiting the growth potential of such a system. The missile defense system development should be balanced to insure that future technology upgrades could be ready for integration as they become needed. What will certainly become critical, especially as we seek to assure our allies of our intent, is that all missile defense advocates speak from common ground. While common ground is evident in the argument for a missile defense system, advocates diverge when the details of the system are debated. One group favors a sea-based system contained on United States Navy *Aegis*-equipped cruisers. A second group advocates a space-based system, while the third group defends the current proposed land-based system. These divergent views only add to the difficulty of building a long-term national missile defense program.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> David R. Tanks, *National Missile Defense: Policy Issues and Technological Capabilities*,

## **Chapter 2**

### **Geopolitical Impacts of National Missile Defense**

While threat, cost, and technology have been at the core of many of the debates both supporting and opposing our proposed limited National Missile Defense program, the geo-political impacts of the program are behind the most heated and impassioned discussions. What effects the missile defense will have on our relations with our allies, our adversaries, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Defense Treaty of 1972, and arms control, has been debated by every position on the political spectrum. While there is very little consensus over its effects, many agree that Russia is an important key to managing the diplomacy of the missile defense deployment.

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Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, (July 2000): 2.4.

Russia's critical position in the missile defense debate is due to three reasons. Russia and the United States are the primary signatories to the ABM Treaty—a treaty that is at the heart of the argument that strategic arms control and ballistic missile defense are incompatible; Russia still possesses thousands of nuclear warheads; and Russia still sees itself as a world superpower, as do many other nations. Therefore, Russian acquiescence to our limited missile defense program would go a long way towards allaying the fears of many other nations.

While Russia is key to a smooth and diplomatic transition to a National Missile Defense program, their approval, or even muted disapproval, will be difficult to obtain. Several factors are likely to sway Russian opinion away from our proposed missile defense program. According to former Director of Central Intelligence, James Woolsey, two of the reasons are *Schadenfreude* and Russia's "budding romance" with China. Woolsey reasons that not only is it important for the Russians to deny something to the lucky and prosperous United States—in this case missile defense—but it is equally important to hold the world's only superpower in check by maintaining a quasi-alliance with China. Even though the proposed system would provide no threat to Russia's ICBM force, it could in fact, negate China's current deterrent capability.<sup>9</sup>

Another reason for Russia's stand against our missile defense is their concern over the breakout potential of the system, or the ability to use the system as a basis for a rapid expansion to a more robust system. Breakout, however, would only be a concern if the United States could gain an exploitable strategic advantage. To do this, the defense would need to block a large portion of an opponent's missiles. The time that it

would take the United States to deploy these interceptors would give the Russians ample opportunity to deploy more warheads, decoys, or penetration aids. Although a missile defense command and control and sensor architecture would be in place for a more robust system, it would be very difficult for the United States to achieve a strategic advantage by deploying more interceptors.<sup>10</sup> Not only is the potential for breakout a major Russian strategic concern, but the concern for a first strike by the United States is as well. By limiting our national missile defense system interceptors to relatively low numbers, we could reduce concerns over both first strike capability and breakout.

Most international concern over a national missile defense system centers on the impact of such a system on the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. While the 1972 treaty is neither sacrosanct nor the cornerstone of American society, by negotiating our missile defense plans with the Russians we will acknowledge that concerns about stability are legitimate and cannot be ignored. There are three actions that the United States can take with respect to the ABM treaty.

First, the United States could terminate all adherence to the treaty. This can be done two different ways: one, by giving the required six months notice in accordance with Article 15 of the treaty, and declaring that “extraordinary events related to the subject matter of this treaty have jeopardized its supreme interests” or, two by declaring that the treaty is null and void as of the date the Soviet Union (the other party to the treaty) ceased to exist. Many fear that unilateral withdrawal from the treaty will lead to

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<sup>9</sup> R. James Woolsey, “The Way to Missile Defense,” *National Review*, (19 June 2000), [http://www.internationaldefense.com/articles/wool\\_16jun.html](http://www.internationaldefense.com/articles/wool_16jun.html).

<sup>10</sup> For mathematical models assessing the impact of a limited NMD system on Russia’s concerns over breakout and first strike capability, see Dean A. Wilkening, “Ballistic-Missile Defence and Strategic Stability,” *Adelphi Paper 334*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2000): 41.

a collapse of the entire international arms control structure. In response to a unilateral withdrawal from the treaty, the Russians could sell potential adversaries the countermeasures needed to defeat our missile defense system, refuse to halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, or maintain increased numbers of Russian missiles on alert. Additionally, Russia would almost certainly place the blame for the failed implementation of START II on the United States since the Duma has tied Russian acceptance of START II to the ABM treaty. With respect to the legal validity of the treaty, two previous administrations over ten years have assured the Russians that the ABM treaty is still in force. The United States has established by “state’s practice” that Russia is the legal successor to the treaty. Clearly, even though United States commitment may have little basis in international law, there remains a delicate international political challenge should we decide, ten years after the fact, to reverse our public position on the treaty.<sup>11</sup> It is also important to note that if we accept the validity of the treaty, we need to recognize the role Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan play in amending the treaty. While Belarus and Kazakhstan seem certain to follow Russia’s lead, Ukraine has taken a much more independent path in its relationship with the United States, and has differed with Russia on some ABM defense issues. While Ukraine’s position on the proposed missile defense system will certainly not have the same international impact as that of Russia, it would be a political mistake to exclude them from future ABM treaty negotiations.<sup>12</sup>

The second option would be to unilaterally reinterpret portions of the treaty that might be violated by a strict interpretation. In fact, the current plan to develop a limited

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<sup>11</sup> Tanks, 2.8.



missile defense system is in agreement with the spirit and intent of the treaty, if not the details, and it can be argued that the system is not strategically significant. It also can be argued that the Russians currently have a limited missile defense system protecting Moscow, so therefore, we should be allowed to have our system as well. The problem with this option is twofold. Not only is there little disagreement in our government that our proposed system would indeed be in violation of the treaty, but by unilaterally interpreting the treaty, we will encourage other nations that are party to international agreements to act in the same manner. Even many citizens of the United States could see this as a dishonorable act.<sup>13</sup>

The third option would be for the United States to negotiate the minimum changes to the ABM treaty with Russia. This option is not without historical precedence. Some argue that the treaty was designed to be a living document, and as such was intended to be kept updated with technological changes.<sup>14</sup> Changes were made in 1974, and again in 1997, and in 1999 Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin agreed to negotiate further changes in the treaty. Times and environments change, and as we have moved from a Cold War environment, the instruments that helped end that conflict should be reexamined. As National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice noted, “ The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty was intended to prevent the development of national missile defenses in the Cold War environment. Today, the principal concerns are

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<sup>12</sup> Steven K. Pifer, interview by author, Stanford, California, 23 January 2001.

<sup>13</sup> Tanks, 2.11.

<sup>14</sup> Sidney Graybeal, comments at START II, Missile Non-Proliferation, and Missile Defense Seminar, Sponsored by Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C., 14 February 1996.

nuclear threats from the Iraqs and North Koreas of the world and the possibility of unauthorized releases as nuclear weapons spread.”<sup>15</sup>

Gaining Russian acquiescence on treaty changes will not be an easy task. While Russia publicly maintains that their concern over treaty changes centers on a resulting arms race, there remains another advantage to be gained by opting not to amend the agreement. The Russians feel the treaty still serves their strategic interests. First, and most obvious, it limits the United States defense against Russian strategic missile forces. Second, it limits U.S. advancement in an area where we are far ahead of the Russians. By limiting our technological superiority in advanced microelectronics—specifically hit-to-kill interceptors and advanced radar and infrared detection and tracking system—Russia minimizes our advantages in areas of strategic competition. Finally, by forcing the United States to either abrogate the treaty, or to make unilateral interpretations of it, Russia’s political posture with other states could be enhanced as it seeks partnerships to slow U.S. worldwide influence.<sup>16</sup>

While gaining Russian acquiescence on ABM treaty changes will not be an easy task, it may not be impossible either. First and foremost the United States must admit that Russia has legitimate fears about a National Missile Defense program no matter how limited, and that Russian leaders fear the proposed national missile defense is another means for the U.S. to further its strategic global superiority. Expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the United States involvement in Kosovo served

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<sup>15</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Promoting the National Interest,” *Foreign Affairs*, (January/February 2000): 59.

<sup>16</sup> Dean A. Wilkening, “Amending the ABM Treaty,” *Survival*, (Spring 2000): 29.

to further Russian concern over U.S. hegemony, and to cause the Russians to question our benign intentions for missile defense. In addition, Russia still considers itself a major nuclear superpower, and it expects to be treated as one, and we should deal with them as a peer. Pride is an important element of these negotiations, and by giving the Russians every opportunity to maintain theirs, U.S. chances for diplomatic success are strengthened.

As was previously stated, Russia is the key to a diplomatically successful deployment of the proposed missile defense system. Therefore, the actions we take with Russia prior to, or during, the deployment may be critical to its success. The first order of action should be to publicly seek Russia's agreement to modify the ABM Treaty so that the U.S. can legally deploy the missile defense system. By offering Russia the chance to negotiate changes allows them to preserve a certain amount of pride associated with being a superpower peer. Additionally, Russia should realize that by agreeing to amend the treaty, they would continue to have some influence over the character of our missile defense programs. However, the United States should make it privately clear to Russia that we are in no way giving them veto power over our national defense systems, and that if after serious negotiations, they still refuse to modify the treaty, we shall consider abandoning the treaty. If the treaty is abandoned, Russia will lose its limited ability to constrain our missile defense systems.

It is also critical to allay Russian fears that a limited missile defense system will pose a threat to their nuclear deterrent. We can best do this by explaining how the low interceptor limits eliminate any threat of breakout, and that if rogue threats grow, they will be countered by improvements in the single-shot kill and decoy discrimination

capabilities of the system rather than increases in missile numbers. We can further Russian confidence in our intentions by increasing transparency measures, and by trying to convince them that they have the ability to rapidly respond to any signs of breakout. For instance, a ban on rapid-reload systems, on-site monitoring procedures, and data exchanges are all examples of transparency measures that could be used.<sup>17</sup>

Another means of seeking the most diplomatic way of fielding the proposed missile defense system is by emphasizing U.S.-Russian cooperation on defense issues—especially those dealing with threats from rogue nations. A Russian proposal to form a joint commission to examine rogue state threats is a good example. Such cooperation could serve to strategically complement, but not replace a national missile defense.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, the United States should begin negotiations to reduce nuclear weapons to a level substantially lower than those discussed in START II, while at the same time unilaterally reducing weapons totals to START II levels. Not only are START II levels adequate for the current deterrence policies, but by committing to unilateral reductions we could further convince Russia that we are not deploying a missile defense to undermine their nuclear deterrent posture.<sup>19</sup> In addition, there are many that believe Russia will soon have to make their own unilateral cuts to their nuclear forces for purely economic reasons. Recent comments by General Vladimir N. Yakolev, commander of Russia's strategic rocket forces, signal a softening of Russia's stance on missile defense. Yakolev acknowledges the difficulty in stopping the momentum in the United States for

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<sup>17</sup> Wilkening, "ABM Treaty," 38.

<sup>18</sup> Daalder, 21.

<sup>19</sup> Daalder, 21.

building a missile defense program, and therefore recommends a deal between the two countries: trading a buildup in American missile defenses for deeper cuts in offensive weapons.<sup>20</sup> The Russian ambassador to the United States, Uri V. Ushakov, recently hinted at flexibility as well when he stated, “ We are willing to enter into discussions with the United States on missile defense.”<sup>21</sup> However, the most recent comments on Russian opinion came from Sergei Ivanov, the head of President Putin’s Security Council, who stated, “It will result in the annihilation of the whole structure of strategic stability and create the prerequisites for a new arms race.”<sup>22</sup>

Though not a signatory to the 1972 ABM Treaty, China bases much of its nuclear deterrence planning on the guarantees derived from the treaty, and China’s response to the deployment of a National Missile Defense by the United States could have a major impact on the international security situation. China’s response to U.S. missile defense deployment may be shaped by two conflicting factors. First, recent history has demonstrated to the Chinese the need to maintain adequate nuclear capability to deter the United States. The 1991 Gulf War, the 1996 Taiwan crisis, and the 1999 NATO action in Kosovo, all displayed the overwhelming conventional capability possessed by the United States. This capability, coupled with the relatively low readiness of the Chinese conventional forces, has forced China into reliance on its nuclear forces.

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<sup>20</sup> Patrick E. Tyler, “With U.S. Missile Defense, Russia Wants Less Offense,” *New York Times*, 15 November 2000, p. A-10.

<sup>21</sup> David Montgomery, “Bush Expected to be ‘tough on Russia’,” *San Jose Mercury News*, 23 January 2001, p. 8A.

<sup>22</sup> Michael R. Gordon, “Allies’ Mood on ‘Star Wars’ Shifts,” *New York Times*, 5 February 2001, p. 1.

The second factor directly conflicts with this reliance. Chinese emphasis on economic development restricts the simultaneous development of large defense systems. Therefore, they have relied on arms control measures to help keep what to them is a comfortable balance of power in Asia.

Unlike Russia, a limited missile defense does threaten China's deterrent forces, and possibly removes one means by which China can influence U.S. intervention in the region. While Chinese deterrence vis-à-vis the United States is not based on mutual assured destruction, it is a form of minimal deterrence. China's recent efforts to modernize their nuclear forces—some estimates put it at \$9.7 billion—by increasing MIRV, countermeasure, and sea-based capabilities would seemingly keep intact their ability to strike the United States. However, this could only happen in the case of an all-out missile attack, which would be sure to bring an all-out missile reprisal from the United States. This in turn would eliminate any speculation on the part of China that they could mount a limited strike against the United States and receive only a proportional retaliatory response.<sup>23</sup> This position is highlighted by the now famous comments of Chinese General Xiong Guangkai in 1995 concerning the United States defense of Taiwan, “in the end, you care more about Los Angeles than you do about Taipei”, and then again this year when an official newspaper, “Liberation Army Daily” warned that a defense of Taiwan could lead to missile attacks on the United States.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Tanks, 6.5.

<sup>24</sup> “Why China Hates NMD,” *Wall Street Journal*, 11 July 2000, [http://www.internationaldefense.com/articles/chinanmd\\_11jul.html](http://www.internationaldefense.com/articles/chinanmd_11jul.html).

In addition to losses in its deterrent capacity, China stands to lose much of the political leverage it enjoys with the United States with the introduction of a missile defense. If the United States possesses a defense against North Korean ICBMs, China's claims of keeping the North Korean missile program in check will have less importance.

While many critics of the proposed national missile defense system predict a new arms race in Asia as a result of the defense program, several other possible outcomes seem more viable. A worst case scenario would see China improving its ability to withstand a first strike by increasing the mobility of its missile forces, while at the same time increasing the number of missiles to insure a large deterrent force. A more realistic scenario would have the Chinese making technological improvements and small scale increases in missile numbers in an effort to maintain a minimal deterrence capability. Since the Chinese are already in the process of modernizing their nuclear forces, this does not seem to be much different than their current action. Other, more symbolic actions are much more possible. For instance, China could rescind its CTBT commitment and resume testing its nuclear weapons. Some scholars argue that this response is unlikely since the criticism from the international community would seem to outweigh any marginal benefits to be gained by this action. However, international criticism of Chinese human rights violations and technology transfers seem to have had little impact. China could also increase the proliferation of missile systems to Pakistan and North Korea. This would only serve to further destabilize the region, which is again, against China's best interests. Another possible response is for China to increase cooperation and ties with Russia, once again a process that they are currently

undertaking.<sup>25</sup> Finally, the most likely response is less cooperation with the United States on regional security measures.

Chinese reaction to the U.S. missile defense system will be driven by several variables. While these variables will most likely not singularly determine China's reaction, they will certainly figure into the decision-making process. The first, which was already mentioned briefly, is Chinese economic reform. This variable can act two ways. While economic reform still appears to be at the forefront of Chinese national priorities, both its success and failure can determine Chinese reactions. Should the Chinese economy continue on its upward trend, it will eventually reach a level satisfactory for Chinese leaders. At that time, attention can be turned to greater increases in the military structure. If however, China's economic growth wanes, less money will be put into defense as long as the economy remains the top priority.<sup>26</sup>

Another variable is China's integration into world trade markets. The more entrenched in world trade that China's economy becomes, the more reliant it will be on the United States and our allies as trading partners. Thus, the more entrenched it becomes in world markets, the less likely that it will adopt measures, which harm this relationship.<sup>27</sup>

A third variable is China's relationship with the Taiwan. Should relations between the two remain cool, the United States can expect a negative response, while if

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<sup>25</sup> Michael J. Green and Toby F. Dalton, "Asian Reactions to U.S. Missile Defense," National Bureau of Asian Research Analysis, vol. 11, no. 3, p. 19.

<sup>26</sup> Green, 19.

<sup>27</sup> Green, 19.



relations between China and Taiwan improve, it could possibly lead to a more moderate Chinese position on missile defense.

Finally, and possibly the most important variable is the overall state of relations between China and the United States, and how China views the intent of the deployed system. For instance, the four party talks aimed at resolving the Korea issue could serve to soften Chinese opinion on U.S. intentions in the region. While at the same time, U.S. intervention in more Kosovo-like operations would only further strengthen Chinese reservations about our missile defense.

While the main theme of China's reactions to the missile defense plan have been highly critical, several recent reactions seem to signal a more moderate tone. Li Bin, a Chinese arms control expert and advisor to the Chinese government recently stated, "If the American intention is to use this system to defend against China, then I can't see any room for compromise. But if they really are just worried about the so-called rogue states, and they aren't trying to undermine China's deterrent, then it may be possible in principle to reach agreement."<sup>28</sup> In addition, an unofficial group of American military experts recently visited Chinese officials and scholars to discuss the defense issue. While the Chinese officials did not endorse the missile defense plan, and maintained their opposition to it, the fact that they allowed and attended the meetings signals a desire for their concerns to be taken into account. Even though one diplomatic option—recognition of China's stature as a nuclear power—is likely to meet opposition in Congress, a simple dialogue between the United States and China over the missile

defense concerns, and establishment of a strategic understanding could minimize the “worst case” arms race scenario.<sup>29</sup>

While much of the geo-political focus on the U.S. plans for a national missile defense centers on Russia and China, there is considerable concern over the impact in Asia as well. Relations between China, India, and Pakistan in the southeast and China, Taiwan, Japan and North and South Korea in the east make this corner of the world extremely volatile. Many argue that U.S. implementation of a missile defense plan would only make the situation worse. China, which lies in the center of the regional concern, has already been discussed in this paper. Most believe that if China reacts moderately to U.S. proposals, the remainder of the region will react in the same manner, and the China-India-Pakistan situation may be the most critical area due to the presence of nuclear weapons. Critics claim that a U.S. missile defense program will spur China to drastic increases in its nuclear weapons. Following suit, India, and in response, Pakistan will increase their nuclear forces as well. There are arguments against this theory. First, as was discussed earlier, due to economic and political constraints the likelihood of large scale Chinese nuclear increases are not high. If the Chinese do in fact increase their nuclear forces, it should be at a level low enough to hold some form of minimal deterrence over the United States. Even then, the chance of a large-scale nuclear response by India is minimal. Not only would India’s economy not support a large nuclear force increase, but it is unlikely that little would be gained politically as well. India and China have not fought a border war since 1962, and relations between the two

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<sup>28</sup> Erik Eckholm, “Experts Try To Make Missile Shield Plan Palatable to China,” *New York Times*, 28 January 2000, p. 1.

have been warming recently. While many in India's Hindu government do not favor outright competition with China, a change in government could result in a change in policy towards Chinese strategic weapons as well.<sup>30</sup> As for the Pakistan-India strategic relationship, the arms competition between the two has been independent of U.S. actions, and is likely to continue no matter how the U.S. acts on missile defense.

The response of South Korea to our missile defense plans will be equally dependent on the entire situation in eastern Asia. To date, South Korea has remained silent on its official position in relation to the U.S. missile defense. Their future reaction will be moderated by several factors. The first factor will be the status of the relationship between North and South Korea. If the peace process is progressing, the South Korean could react coolly to any U.S. measures that could upset the North Koreans, and therefore the process. If however, the peace process is viewed as faltering, the South Koreans should be much more amenable to the defense system.

The second factor will be the 1994 Agreed Framework between the United States and North Korea. Should the agreement fail, there would be no constraints on the North Korean nuclear weapons program. In this case, South Korea would welcome any increase to the United States' defensive posture.

The third factor once again relates to China, but not in the terms of an arms race. Rather this factor relies on the political and cooperative relationship between the United States and China. Since a non-cooperative relationship between these regional powers

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<sup>29</sup> Eckholm, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Sidney D. Drell, interview by author, Stanford, California, 25 January 2001.

will hurt South Korea's attempts to reconcile with North Korea, the South Korean government could shift from tacit support of a missile defense to outward disapproval if it appears that United States-Chinese relations are faltering over the missile defense.<sup>31</sup>

Japan's stance on our national missile defense will, much like that of our European allies, depend on its effects on international arms control efforts. While a strong defensive posture for the United States is better for Japan, the perceived impact on arms control—for example, the buildup of nuclear forces in China and India, coupled with the perceived threat from North Korea will have a big effect on Japan's public stance. One would expect Japan to react much like many of the other U.S. allies, assuring us that they “understand” the United States' concern for a defensive system until nonproliferation efforts begin to unravel.<sup>32</sup>

Taiwan's reaction to our proposed defensive system is much more complex. While the government of Taiwan has had no official position on our missile defense plan so far, their approval or disapproval may not prove to be as important as their actions. If deployed, a missile defense would almost certainly reduce China's ability to deter the United States, and would in turn increase Taiwan's security. However, two scenarios could become very volatile over this situation. The first could occur if China feels that an impending missile defense will bolster security ties between the U.S. and Taiwan. In this case, China could make a preemptive military move to unite the two before a missile defense system becomes established. The second could occur if in the face of renewed

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<sup>31</sup> Green, 9.

<sup>32</sup> Green, 7.

Chinese hostility, Taiwan moves to increase their counterstrike capability.<sup>33</sup> In each case, the real threat to regional security does not lie in the deployment of a missile defense system, but in the time preceding it.

While there has been much discussion about the impact of the National Missile Defense system on our relations with Russia, China and Asia, there is also concern about the impact on, and reactions from, our European allies. Many critics worry about the effects on Europe. While America's NATO allies have traditionally been wary of missile defenses, there is some history of support for such programs. For instance, when President Reagan presented his proposal to share the technology for SDI, several nations joined his effort. By the end of President Reagan's second term, six nations—Israel, Germany, Japan, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom—were involved in SDI research.<sup>34</sup> Of course, SDI called for the defense of our allies as well.

Today however, such support is more difficult to find. Most comments out of Europe have been critical of a defense system that German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer calls “a national decision with a very strong international impact”.<sup>35</sup> Concerns of the European nations are varied, and include the concern that the system will lead the United States towards isolationism and away from involvement in European security, or in other words, ‘strategic decoupling’; that Europe will be left as the principal target of attack; that the defense will stimulate an arms race with the Russians; and that increased

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<sup>33</sup> Green, 13.

<sup>34</sup> Edward Teller, personal notes presented to author, 14 September 2000, Stanford, California.

<sup>35</sup> Tom Bielefeld, “NMD and Europe,” manuscript of talk given at Institut für Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik, Hamburg, Germany, 23-31 August 2000, citing Reuters, 8 May 2000.

emphasis worldwide on defense systems will render the nuclear deterrent forces of France and Great Britain less effective.<sup>36</sup>

The solution to many of these concerns, especially those reinvigorated arms races, lies with Russia. If the United States can reach agreement with the Russians, many of the European concerns will go away. A separate opinion stressed by former Secretary of Defense William Cohen makes the opposite case however. Secretary Cohen predicted that Russia could drop its opposition to amending the ABM Treaty if our NATO allies support the project.<sup>37</sup> In either case, the link between Russian and NATO reaction is very close.

European concern over ‘strategic decoupling’ can also be disputed. In fact, the United States should be more willing to defend its NATO allies if it can defend its own homeland. In addition, the proposed missile defense will have extremely limited capabilities, and thus should not produce the decoupling that some predict. Current proposals by the European Union to create a European Union military force independent of NATO has as much, if not more, probability of decoupling the defense of Europe.

Finally, even though defensive systems could begin to gain more momentum as strategic defensive systems, they will continue to be very expensive, and should not find themselves in Russian plans for a very long time, thus ensuring the deterrent capabilities of both Great Britain and France.

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<sup>36</sup> Wilkening, “Ballistic-Missile Defence,” 71.

<sup>37</sup> Christopher Marquis, “Cohen Says Missile Defense System Requires Support of Allies,” *New York Times*, 26 July 2000, <http://ca.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/ebird>.

While most comments from our European allies seem to be aimed against the proposed missile defense program, recent comments from European leaders and scholars may indicate a more approving trend. William Hague, leader of Great Britain's Conservative party recently declared his support for President Bush's plan to go ahead with a missile defense, and many British officials now believe that Prime Minister Blair will approve U.S. plans to improve radar sites in the United Kingdom to make them compatible with the missile defense system. French defense scholar Francois Heisbourg, in an article for the International Herald Tribune, also recently advised Europeans to "refrain from giving the impression that they are denying the U.S. population its right to defend itself against missiles."<sup>38</sup> Most recently, at the Munich Conference on Security Policy, European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana stated that the United States "has the right to deploy" a national missile defense system, and dismissed concerns about the effect on the ABM Treaty by saying, "It's not a bible".<sup>39</sup>

While the impact of the deployment of a national missile defense by the United States on international security is often examined on a nation by nation basis, the singular concern by many critics of the system is the overall effect on arms control. Many critics believe that by increasing defenses, the United States will bring an equal and opposite reaction from other nuclear powers, thus increasing offensive weapons to overwhelm our defenses. This argument is based on the belief that offensive systems are much cheaper to obtain than defensive ones, and therefore it is easier, and more cost

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<sup>38</sup> Robert Kagan, "Calculating the 'Rumsfeld Effect,'" *Washington Post*, 19 January 2001, 37.

<sup>39</sup> "E.U. Leader Says U.S. Has Right to Missile-Defense System," *USA Today*, 6 February 2001, 8.

effective to increase offensive output. It also supposes that defensive systems are destabilizing, and that the retaliatory capability of an opponent forms the basis for deterrence. In fact, even fallout shelters were thought by some to be destabilizing in the 1960s.<sup>40</sup> Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara used the argument of equal and opposite reaction to lobby against deployment of a large U.S. anti-ballistic missile defense in the mid-1960s. He argued that the deployment of such a system would bring a reaction from the Soviet Union that would negate the value of our system and produce the same amount of casualties at a higher expense. McNamara's critics pointed out at the time that there was no precedence in the history of the arms race that such a reaction was inevitable, but his argument was simple and effective.<sup>41</sup>

The classic sword or shield debate may have had some bearing when swords and shields were both cheaper and easier to produce. Comparing swords to nuclear missiles is poetic, but it is hardly rational. The 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty was based on the theory that prohibiting a national missile defense, and thus preserving retaliatory capabilities, would reduce the incentive for both the United States and the Soviet Union to build offensive weapons. However, 15 years after the treaty was signed, the Soviet Union's nuclear warhead inventory grew from approximately 2000 to approximately 10,000, and the inventory of the United States grew from about 3700 to about 8000. If the goal of limiting defenses is to prevent arms races, it failed here.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Albert Wohlstetter, "Bishops, Statesmen, and Other Strategists On the Bombing of Innocents," *Commentary*, June 1983, 24.

<sup>41</sup> Halperin, 81.

<sup>42</sup> "A Look At...Missile Defense," *Washington Post*, 11 June 2000, B03.



The action-reaction argument against our proposed limited national missile defense program fails to address two major differences between what was from the 1960s to the early 1990s a Soviet-centered arms control policy, and our currently stated policy of defending against limited attacks. First, defense systems such as SDI and GPALS were aimed at a large-scale threat and were intended to defend the United States against large-scale nuclear attacks from the Soviet Union. Many of the arguments against those systems are no longer valid against a system that is only required to intercept a handful of incoming missiles. Second, the arguments against past programs were based on the belief that the Soviet Union had the economic resources to increase their nuclear forces. That is no longer (if it ever was) true. In fact, Russia's Security Council admitted in 1998 that by 2010 they would no longer be able to maintain more than 1500 strategic warheads.<sup>43</sup> An option that Russia has stated it would pursue, is the buildup of asymmetric technologies capable of penetrating any missile defense shield. According to Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeyev, "We had three mighty programs to counteract asymmetrically the national missile defense system of the United States during the period of Reagan' 'star wars'.... But we still have them and can take them up again."<sup>44</sup>

A major weakness of our current security policy based on the ABM treaty is that it may actually encourage states to try to obtain ballistic missile delivered weapons of mass destruction, since the treaty insures that the U.S. will not be capable of defending itself against ballistic missiles. Since U.S. military actions over the last 10 years have

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<sup>43</sup> "A Look At...Missile Defense," B03.

proven the dominance of our conventional strength, other nations seeking an asymmetric counter to our strength may seek out long-range weapons. The ABM treaty forbids the United States from developing a national missile defense system, and thus insures that ICBM efforts by other nations could prove fruitful.<sup>45</sup>

While at least one recent research study has characterized the action-reaction concerns over our national missile defense as “overblown”, there is always the possibility that this dynamic could occur.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, as was stated before, the system that we attempt to sell may not be as important as the way we sell it. Our goal should be to sell our deployment in a cooperative manner, and stress a deterrent message against new missile capabilities.

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<sup>44</sup> Patrick E. Tyler, “Russia rattles its saber with threat of a renewed nuclear weapons race,” *San Jose Mercury News*, 6 February 2001, 4A.

<sup>45</sup> Tanks, 6.3.

<sup>46</sup> Daalder, 16.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Deterrence: A Cold War Strategy**

To say the international security picture has “changed” over the last ten years would be a gross understatement. It sometimes seems that the only similarity between

that picture in 1990 and the picture today is the ABM Treaty of 1972. The powerful Soviet Union no longer exists and has been replaced by Russia—a nation with a much smaller, older, and less reliable nuclear force. No longer do Russia and the United States compete directly in military matters the way they did during the Cold War, just as Russia no longer poses the threat to the United States and Europe that the Soviet Union did. In light of our multi-polar world, in which the United States is the only true superpower, we now have the opportunity to examine our nation’s security policies, and to reevaluate our security needs for the future—specifically those that deal with strategic offensive weapons and ballistic missile defense.

In a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations on January 12, 1954, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles explained that the administration had made a decision to adopt a national security strategy that would “depend primarily upon a great capacity to retaliate, instantly, by means and at places of our choosing.”<sup>47</sup> This policy, later known as “massive retaliation” has formed the basis for all options of response to attack by weapons of mass destruction since its inception. Still today, our national policy of deterrence is based on this ability to retaliate by means and at places of our choosing. We have, for approximately 50 years, defended ourselves against weapons of mass destruction by deterring them, or in other words, by threatening to respond in kind to any attacks on the United States or its allies.

Deterrence is not new. Derived from the Latin phrase *terrere* or “to frighten”, deterrence has been an instrument of defense and security as long as man has been able

to frighten others. However, strategic deterrence, and its applicability to defense against mass destruction, has only been a factor since the mid-1950s. While strategic deterrence formed the basis of our national security policy during the Cold War, it continues to be the cornerstone of our security policy today. There has been, and still is, a great deal of controversy over our policy of deterrence for many reasons, and whether deterrence has proven to be the correct policy in the past, as well as a viable policy for the future.

Has the strategic security of the United States been because of deterrence or in spite of it? Historians and political scientists often point to the successes of deterrence, both before and after the advent of mutual assured destruction. There are however arguments that deterrence has not played the role that many believe. The difficulty in judging the success of deterrence is sometimes referred to as the “non-barking dog problem”—the difficulty of explaining why an event did not happen. In the case of deterrence, what appears to have been a success for the policy of deterrence may in fact have been attributable to other factors. For instance, the attacker may never have intended to challenge a defender’s commitment.<sup>48</sup>

There are historical questions about the efficacy of deterrence as well. In his book *Japan’s Decision for War*, Nobutaka Ike examined the archives of the Japanese Defense Agency and concluded that no one within the Japanese government during World War II would say with any certainty that Japan would win the war, but that they in fact were hoping for a negotiated settlement. Ike believes that one lesson to be drawn

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<sup>47</sup> Jerome H. Kahan, *Security in the Nuclear Age*, (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1975), 12.

from Japanese actions is that “there are definite limits to the effectiveness of threats used by one nation to deter another nation from pursuing a certain course of action—in this case, choosing the alternative of war. Against those who are willing to take great risks, deterrence may not be effective.”<sup>49</sup> A recent Project AIR FORCE study by RAND also highlights past failures of deterrence with respect to China. The study discusses two instances in the last 50 years in which the United States and the Soviet Union had to threaten violence to deter China, even when China was by far the weaker state. The first instance occurred in 1955 when the United States hinted very strongly at the possibility of using nuclear weapons to force an end to the Chinese harassment of Jinmen and Matsu islands. Then again in 1969, the Soviet Union used threats of nuclear action to end the border clashes with China. While both instances may be called a form of deterrence by threat, they both are cases where a more powerful adversary, until taking deliberate actions, could not deter a much weaker state.<sup>50</sup>

While the historical examples above show several instances where the effectiveness of deterrence can be called into question, perhaps there is a problem with our security strategy today in that it is based too much on history. Perhaps our strategy is based too much on a Cold War environment of 10 years ago. As Dr. Sidney Drell wrote in his 1983 book, *Facing the Threat of Nuclear Weapons*,

Deterrence is the key concept of the nuclear age. It requires of us a new common sense.... Except for the fact that it has worked for the past two

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<sup>48</sup> Michael E. Brown et al., eds., *America's Strategic Choices*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2000), 118.

<sup>49</sup> Nobutaka Ike, *Japan's Decision For War*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1967), xxvi.

<sup>50</sup> Zalmay M. Khalilzad, et al., *The United States and a Rising China*, (Washington, D.C.: RAND, 1999), 84.

decades, there isn't very much that is attractive about nuclear deterrence. It is of questionable morality, of unquestioned danger, and, as—as a child of the nuclear revolution—devoid of historical pedigree. Despite these blemishes it is the only game in town, and this fact has to be understood.<sup>51</sup>

Now, with the turn of the century, we should examine the role of deterrence as one of the key concepts of our age, and apply a new common sense to a national security strategy adapted to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In order for deterrence to be a viable defense strategy, several ingredients are essential: the first is a state of mind expressing a national will. The second is the military capability to respond in kind to an act of aggression, and the third is rational behavior by all nations involved.<sup>52</sup> While the United States certainly possesses the military capability to respond to many different acts of aggression, and while the will of our country to deter aggressive actions against it have seldom been debated, the rational behavior of all nations involved in the deterrence equation has certainly been questioned. Professor Kalevi J. Holsti highlights the importance of rational decision-making in the following:

The premises underlying strategic deterrence are that (1) decisions by both the defender and the challenger will be based on rational calculations of probable costs and gains, accurate evaluations of the situation, and careful assessments of relative capabilities; (2) a high level of threat, such as that posed by nuclear weapons inhibits rather than provokes aggressive behavior; (3) the value hierarchies of both the defender and the challenger are similar, at least to the point that each places the avoidance of large-scale violence at or near the top; and (4) both sides maintain tight centralized control over decisions that might involve or provoke the use of

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<sup>51</sup> Sidney D. Drell, *Facing the Threat of Nuclear Weapons*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983), 13-14.

<sup>52</sup> Drell, *Facing the Threat*, 14.

strategic weapons. Deterrence thus presupposes rational and predictable decision processes. Put somewhat differently, most deterrence theories assume that the nation-state can be thought of as a unitary rational actor.<sup>53</sup>

Can all modern nation-states then be deterred? Note some of the key terms in the previous definition: “accurate evaluations of the situation”, “value hierarchies of both the defender and the challenger are similar”, and “Deterrence thus presupposes rational and predictable decision processes”. Therein is where much of the disagreement over the concept of the universal efficacy of deterrence. Some scholars argue that some nation-states possess attributes that do not necessarily lend themselves to rational or predictable behavior. Four factors call into question the rationale of some states. First, some states are so highly motivated to gain their aims that they are more prepared than normal or rational actors to use force to achieve their objective. A dictator who senses that he is “backed into a corner” fits this scenario. A possible deterrent threat may be insufficient to deter a foreign leader who sees his own survival threatened and the threat or use of weapons of mass destruction as his only leverage for achieving a negotiated settlement.<sup>54</sup> Second, due to their motivation or beliefs, some states show a greater indifference towards the suffering of their citizens, making them willing to accept greater losses. Third, some states are poor calculators making them less likely to perceive a defender’s threats or to ignore such threats.<sup>55</sup> Iraq’s response to the United States’ demands to leave Kuwait is a good example. The fourth factor is the role of fatalism in the decision-making process. If a state, or the decision-maker within the

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<sup>53</sup> K.J. Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1977), 315.



state, believes that superhuman forces ultimately control human affairs, then the decision-maker is absolved of all responsibility for his actions. For example, when Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku, who developed the plan for the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, found the Navy Chief of Staff hesitant to accept the great risks associated with the attack, he remarked, “The only question that remains is the blessing of Heaven. If we have Heaven’s blessing, there will be no doubt of success.”<sup>56</sup> Some similarities can be seen between the comments of Admiral Yamamoto and the statements of many religious fundamentalists, especially in the Mideast. While our security relations with Russia will be based on the same calculus of deterrence that has kept the peace between our two nations for the last 50 years, societal destruction does not seem to be an immediate concern. The more immediate threat appears to emanate from states less susceptible to the ‘logical’ cost-benefit tradeoff of the ‘rational’ defense theory.<sup>57</sup>

Another position adheres to the belief that all states are deterrable, all situations are not. In other words, situations can occur that push a state to the untenable point that they feel they must respond in a way that for them, would not be normal or rational.<sup>58</sup> With apologies to P.T Barnum, this is much like “You can deter all of the states some of the time, and some of the states all of the time, but you cannot deter all of the states all of the time.”

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<sup>54</sup> Sidney D. Drell, Abraham D. Sofaer, and George D. Wilson, eds., *The New Terror*, (Stanford, California, The Hoover Institution Press, 1999), 310.

<sup>55</sup> Brown, et al., 147.

<sup>56</sup> Ike, xxvi.

<sup>57</sup> Sam J. Tangredi, *All Possible Wars? Toward a Consensus View of the Future Security Environment, 2001-2025*, (Washington, D.C.: Institute for National Strategic Studies, 2000), 86, citing Zalmay Khalilzad and Ian O. Lesser, eds., *Sources of Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Regional Futures and U.S. Strategy*, (Santa Monica, California: RAND, 1998), 34.

<sup>58</sup> James M. Lindsay, telephone interview by author, 16 January 2001.

A common argument against the policy of deterrence is that it is morally reprehensible. Since many believe that deterrence and missile defenses are mutually exclusive, one political scientist describes this relationship as “Offense is defense, defense is offense. Killing people is good, killing weapons is bad.”<sup>59</sup> The apparent contradiction between the ends: saving populations from nuclear war—and the means: by threatening massive retaliation and decimation of many non-combatants, has been debated by scholars, politicians, military leaders, and even clergy for years. The Pastoral Letter on “The Challenge of Peace” which was adopted by the Conference of Catholic Bishops on War and Peace is an historic document that probed the moral concerns associated with deterrence. While critical of nuclear war, the letter did accept the policy of deterrence “not as an end in itself but as a step on the way toward a progressive disarmament.”<sup>60</sup> One wonders if the same letter written today would approve of a missile defense designed as a step towards progressive disarmament? Not everyone shares the bishops’ acceptance of deterrence as being morally legitimate. President Reagan’s SDI was based in part at least, on his moral dissatisfaction with deterrence. In his March 23, 1983 dinner speech announcing his intention to pursue a missile defense program, President Reagan said, “I have become more and more deeply convinced that the human spirit must be capable of rising above dealing with other nations and human beings by threatening their existence... Wouldn’t it be better to save lives than to avenge them? Are we not capable of demonstrating our peaceful intention by applying all our abilities and our ingenuity to achieving a truly lasting stability?”

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<sup>59</sup> Wohlstetter, 16.

<sup>60</sup> “The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response,” Pastoral Letter of the Conference of Catholic Bishops on War and Peace, 1983, para 174.

One of the guests invited to attend that dinner was Dr. Edward Teller, a pioneer in the field of nuclear weapons. Dr. Teller remembers the SDI as a proposal to provide “a humane alternative to retaliation”.<sup>61</sup>

While issues of morality, rational decision-making, and predictability are the central arguments against deterrence, there are several other arguments used to discount a policy of deterrence or as one critic calls it, “the dogma of consensual, mutual vulnerability”.<sup>62</sup> The first of these is the belief that deterrence was adequate as a Cold War strategy but due to its inflexibility, it is no longer valid for today’s international scenario. This inflexibility, or absoluteness, implies an all-or-nothing response to an international crisis above an uncertain threshold. This argument is extremely critical in today’s world of asymmetric warfare. While it is becoming increasingly possible that an adversary could deal the United States a strategically crippling blow by means other than weapons of mass destruction, would a nuclear deterrence capability be the proper form of defense against such attacks? The other concern with flexibility is over a possible pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons in anticipation of an attack from another party, when in fact, our own policymakers have misinterpreted the intentions of the adversary. This response raises the risk of triggering what it had intended to avoid-- nuclear escalation.<sup>63</sup> Another argument is that a strategy of deterrence relies too heavily on anticipated behavior, and not enough on the actual study of decision making during conflicts. Critics also find arguments with the basic logic of deterrence. While the

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<sup>61</sup> Teller, notes.

<sup>62</sup> Walter S. Jones, *The Logic of International Relations*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 334.

<sup>63</sup> Daalder, 11.

theory of deterrence places great importance on demonstrating a willingness to increase the risks of military policy, the objective of the policy is to make situations safer.<sup>64</sup>

While the above arguments attempt to discredit the overall theory of deterrence in general, there are also two other problems with the theory as it compares to a missile defense capability. First, deterrence can do nothing to stop an accidental or unintentional launch of a nuclear weapon. As the Russian military deteriorates, security and safety of Russian nuclear forces has to be a concern. As well, as proliferation of nuclear capability increases, and as more nations increase their nuclear arsenals, the possibility of accidental launches increases. Second, deterrence is a two way street. If U.S. policy is to deter other nations without a credible means of missile defense, those other nations can in turn, deter the United States. Even conventional military actions by the United States could be answered with a limited nuclear action by any state possessing even a minimal nuclear capability. Finally, a deterrence driven nuclear strike that severely disrupts a nation's economy or leadership may prove too disruptive to regional power balances, just as use of nuclear weapons against an ethnic group may not be considered politically viable. Related to this, the U.S. public may be less willing to inflict heavy losses on a third world nation in response to a very limited attack, especially when the actions appear to be at the direction of a despotic dictator.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Jones, 334.

<sup>65</sup> Drell, Sofaer, and Wilson, 311.

## **Chapter 4**

### **A Course for the Twenty-First Century**

As the United States enters the twenty-first century, it faces an international system that is arguably less stable and more conflict prone than at any other time in our nation's history. The bipolar world that had so dominated the international security system for the last 50 years has been displaced by a multi-polar system. Spheres of influence will not be as easily defined as they were when the world was conspicuously divided between the Warsaw Pact and its allies, and the United States and its allies. While states will now have much more latitude to determine their foreign policy and security goals than they did during the Cold War, the threat of the United States being dragged into a regional conflict will be much greater.<sup>66</sup>

At the same time, the status of the United States as the world's only true superpower will effect our national security and how we approach our security policy. While the overwhelming superiority of the United States in conventional warfare was so plainly displayed during Operation Desert Storm and in Kosovo, it convinced some states that only weapons of mass destruction can counter the power of the United States. In addition, the efforts that the United States has made at times to avoid or minimize casualties have signaled that it is extremely averse to risk. Therefore, the lesson that many states have learned is that weapons of mass destruction are the best means of confronting the United States since we are less likely to risk intervention if there is a potential for high numbers of American casualties or attacks on U.S. soil. Recent emphasis on asymmetric warfare has also shifted emphasis away from conventional warfare, and towards engaging superior conventional forces through unconventional means.

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<sup>66</sup> Brown, et al., 118-119.

While the multi-polar environment and the overwhelming conventional strength of the United States should figure into our future security policy, U.S.-Russian relations will play a major role as well. While some rewards have already been reaped from the “peace dividend” following the Cold War, there remains many more benefits that we have yet to realize, especially in cuts to our nuclear forces. Our current nuclear deterrence doctrine, developed during a Cold War period dominated by competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, viewed nuclear weapons as a last resort, or as a basis for mutual deterrence. In contrast, many today fear that some states may see the use of nuclear weapons as a threat to be employed against the United States to prevent intervention. By reexamining our security policy, perhaps we can reduce our dependence on nuclear weapons, while at the same time, decreasing the perceived threat.

Whereas our past policy of deterrence was adequate for a bipolar world, today’s more complex world requires a more complex security policy—a “diplomatic deterrent defense” that combines diplomacy, deterrence, and defense into a broad policy designed to answer security concerns in the next century. Missile defense systems, nuclear weapons, and arms control efforts can only be effective if they are used as a means to a powerful end, not as an end in themselves, and any discussions about one must be with regards to the other two. A broad strategy requiring international cooperation is needed to reduce the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and reduce the dependency on nuclear weapons while at the same time ensuring the security of the United States. As Albert Wohlstetter said during the debate over deterrence in 1958, “ A deterrent strategy is aimed at a rational enemy. Without a deterrent, general war is likely. With

it, however, war might still occur. This is one reason deterrence is only a part and not the whole of a military and foreign policy.”<sup>67</sup>

The first aspect of a diplomatic deterrent defense should be diplomacy. Unfortunately, much of the most recent discussion about a missile defense program has become a debate over missile defense *or* arms control, instead of the much more important missile defense *and* arms control. Certainly, many arms control treaties have served to retard the technological advances of advanced nations—and the United States has undoubtedly been the most effected, but they have also served an important purpose. For instance, while the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty may have slowed U.S. progress in the field of missile defense, it also sent a message to the rest of the world. It signaled that the United States was serious about stemming the tide of the arms race. Treaties signed by the United States such as the ABM Treaty add legitimacy to our role as a peacemaker and conscience for the rest of the world. By scrapping the treaty outright, we will lose some moral leverage not only with our allies, but also with those many nations that are not aligned with any other power. In addition, abandoning the treaty would certainly endanger the recent accomplishments in arms reductions. It is important to note however, that the ABM Treaty is not sacrosanct, and a time may come that we must abrogate it to provide for the defense of the nation.

A second diplomatic course that we should follow is to adopt a set of policies that firmly reflects our opposition to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This position against proliferation should be a central point of our security policy, and should

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<sup>67</sup> Albert Wohlstetter, “The Delicate Balance of Terror,” 6 November 1958,



plainly spell out what diplomatic, economic, or military measures we are prepared to take against those that violate international security. Unless we use diplomatic measures to stop proliferation now, we may eventually have to use defensive measures to stop the same weapons later.

The second aspect of diplomatic deterrent defense is deterrence. The many criticisms leveled against deterrence have been mentioned earlier in this paper. Whether the United States has avoided nuclear war over the last 50 years because of deterrence, or in spite of it, may be irrelevant now. What seems certain however, is that while missile defense begins to play a bigger role in the defense of the United States, there still is a requirement for deterrent forces. Therefore, deterrence at least for now, should remain a portion of our security policy. Ideally, the world would be better served by the banishment of all nuclear weapons. Realistically, that will not happen any time soon, but by changing the role of deterrence, we can slowly begin to decrease our reliance on nuclear capability. Retired Air Force General Lee Butler, who as Commander in Chief of the United States Strategic Command was responsible for all U.S. nuclear weapons, refers to the concept of “directionality”—moving in the direction of nuclear disarmament.<sup>68</sup>

As we examine the security policy for the twenty-first century, we should reexamine the role that deterrence is to play. During the Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union pursued a warfighting strategy. This strategy dictated the need to target multiple warheads at a high number of high value targets through

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<http://www.rand.org/publications/classics/wohlstetter/P1472/P1472.html>.

counterforce targeting. Today, the United States and Russia are no longer in direct military competition with each other. Therefore, we do not need the same requirements for effective deterrence. This should give us the capability to decrease the number of military targets, move away from counterforce targeting to fight a war, and move towards a countervalue targeting plan—aimed more at economic targets—to deter war. Since far fewer warheads are required to deter a war than to fight one, this option should also afford us the opportunity to greatly reduce our nuclear forces. This reduction in nuclear forces also raises the possibility of reducing our triad force of intercontinental ballistic missiles, strategic bombers and submarine launched ballistic missiles to a dyad consisting of only to arms. General Butler even believes that we could further reduce our nuclear forces to submarine-based platforms only.<sup>69</sup>

The third aspect of our new security strategy should be a limited missile defense designed to accomplish the following: defend against a limited missile attack, but designed with the capability to make the technological improvements necessary to defeat improving offensive technologies; take away the incentive for the development of missile technologies by other developing countries; take away the incentive for proliferation of missile technology; and lead to the reduction in nuclear weapons. As stated before, this defensive capability must be instituted in concert with our diplomatic security efforts. Our defense objectives should be to strike a balance between the need to defend the homeland and our needs to maintain a secure foreign policy. The key to this balance will be our diplomatic relations with Russia and China over the missile

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<sup>68</sup> George Lee Butler, telephone interview with author, 29 January 2001.

<sup>69</sup> Butler interview.

defense system. A limited missile defense system could make our country more secure, but a system that reduces the international strategic balance and cooperation towards non-proliferation could also be detrimental to our security. While predicting the future effects of a changing security policy amounts to scientific guessing, we must always consider the international impacts. However, when the security interests of the United States conflict with those of another nation, our interests must come first. As National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice recently stated,

Power matters, both the exercise of power by the United States and the ability of others to exercise it. Yet many in the United States are (and have always been) uncomfortable with the notions of power politics, great powers, and power balances. In an extreme form, this discomfort leads to a reflexive appeal instead to notions of international law and norms, and the belief that the support of many states—or even better, of institutions like the United Nations—is essential to the legitimate exercise of power. The “national interest” is replaced with “humanitarian interests” or the interests of the “international community”. The belief that the United States is exercising power legitimately only when it is doing so on behalf of something or someone else was deeply rooted in Wilsonian thought.... To be sure, there is nothing wrong with doing something that benefits all humanity, but that is, in a sense, a second-order effect. America’s pursuit of the national interest will create conditions that promote freedom, markets, and peace. Its pursuit of national interests after World War II led to a more prosperous and democratic world. This can happen again.<sup>70</sup>

As Morton Halperin once said, “One of the truisms of bureaucracy is that it resists change. Innovation, when it occurs, must generally be explained.”<sup>71</sup> Today, we

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<sup>70</sup> Rice, 47.

<sup>71</sup> Halperin, 92.

have the capability to make those changes required to establish a security policy for the twenty-first century. The United States should take this opportunity to reduce nuclear arsenals worldwide and deploy a limited national missile defense system while at the same time preserving the intent of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

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